

Learning and Visioning Themes from 2008 Cooperative Conservation Workshop Participants

For this exercise, Workshop participants were asked to think about everything they needed to do when they returned to their communities. Participants were asked to think of what new partners, resources, or ideas they were thinking of that would enable them to sustain their collaborations. What new policies, resources, or practices did they need to ramp up or take their collaborations to the next level? Participants generated over 100 ideas for improving and expanding cooperative conservation in the United States. This is a synopsis of some of those ideas, organized into general categories.

Reaching Out to New Partners

- Extend a hand early-on to land owners. They need to be on board early to increase the relevance of the project and ground it in local knowledge.
- Reach out to Tribal communities more actively and consistently.
- Involve minority groups in partnerships. They are frequently under-represented in partnerships.
- Partner with education institutions at all levels. This increases community support and builds long-term capacity and sustainability.
- Extend partnerships to local, county, State, and Federal elected officials and involve local government agencies.
- Reach out to realtors, developers, and resource extraction and use companies. These business interests often are looking for ways to give back to their communities and may have organizational resources.

Improving Incentives for Partnerships

- Review tax codes to make sure landowners and business are not penalized for participating in partnerships and create more tax incentives to reward participation.
- Enact “Good Samaritan” legislation to remove legal risks for business that participate in remediation or restoration.
- Make sure that every government agency has a way to measure and reward participation in cooperative conservation efforts. Continue to expand personnel rewards and Government Performance and Results Act measures.

Getting the Word Out

- Develop educational materials on cooperative conservation for school children and the public. Make these materials widely available.
- Develop relationships and partnerships with local, regional, and national media. Continue to feed them success stories.
- Make more partnership movies about success stories.
- Continue to gather information in easy to find locations about how to collaborate, best practices, and success stories.

Improving Individual and Organizational Collaboration Capacity

- Training and learning needs to happen at all levels.
- Continue to improve collaborative leadership capacity within city, State, and Federal agencies.
- Educate appointed agency leaders about the importance of cooperative conservation.

Strengthening Government Coordination

- Citizens like the concept of “one government” for partnerships and problem solving. Continue to remove barriers for agencies to work together. Seek common authorities across agencies.
- Develop collaborative research initiatives with communities, local, State, and Federal agencies.
- Remove incentives for departments, divisions, and agencies to “flag plant” or create kingdoms. Budgets and personnel mechanisms have to reward coordination.
- Keep improving budgeting, contracting, and procurement policies and procedures so that agencies can work together.
- Build more effective agency roundtable structures to improve coordination around major initiatives.

Improving Legal and Administrative Mechanisms

- Need Federal legislation for liability protection.
- Make umbrella, national agreements or MOUs between agencies to accomplish and authorize specific initiatives.
- Develop congressional stewardship area designation.
- Revise policies on wages to encourage and count donated time.

Leverage and Increase Resources

- Work more actively with businesses and other institutions to leverage support.
- Provide more resources for research and data collection that supports partnerships and adaptive monitoring and management.
- Simplify grants and procurement processes for partnerships.
- Streamline agreement processes to move funds more easily and to allow for multi-jurisdictional and multi-year funding.
- Develop new ways to track pooled resources for partnerships. Groups want to be accountable not accountants.

Develop Social Capital to Weather Transitions

- Make sure that current partnerships and programs are housed in critical programs and policies so they will withstand political transitions.
- Develop clear visions, goals, and values for cooperative conservation so that the progress continues even if specific programs change.
- Work with local, State, and Federal elected officials to ensure that cooperative conservation continues to be funded.
- Develop a transition strategy for new presidential administration so that improvements are not lost.